

A Chance at Normal by **motrcolt**

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Summary: Continuation of S2E9. With the portal finally closed, El finally has a shot at a normal life. With a new father, friends who would do anything for her, and high school right around the corner, the world is looking wide open. After all Brenner is dead right? And the Mind Flayer is definitely out of reach... Slow-Build. Havn't decided if this will primarily be Mike or El's POV

A Chance at Normal

Edited – No new information or story so if you have read it already, don't feel the need to go through it again. I just added some details / change of words, mainly to the end of the chapter, to make it feel a little more full.

Jim Hopper stood leaning against a faded green Ford Pinto as he took another long drag. It was surprisingly warm considering how late in the year it was getting in Hawkins or maybe it was just the heat from the smoke filling his lungs. No, it was definitely warm for December, especially with the official start of Winter only two days away. It wouldn't be surprising to have snow on the ground already. He looked up at the dark Wednesday night sky, pausing before he slowly exhaled. It was a clear night, but Jim could have sworn it felt like a storm was in the air.

"... Hopper."

Shaking his head, he looked over almost forgetting he wasn't alone for a moment. Well of course he wasn't alone, it wasn't even his car he was leaning against. "Oh, sorry Joyce," he said handing the cigarette over in her direction.

"What? No, I said... Well yea, give me that," she responded, taking the half used up cigarette butt and taking a quick pull and releasing it. "I said it looks like they're coming out now." She dropped it on the ground, and pressed out the smoldering paper with her foot.

"Hey, come on now. There was plenty left in that," he tried to sound devastated. Jim looked over at her and saw a slight chuckle on her face. "Good, she could use a laugh," he thought as he cracked a small smile in her direction.

He didn't think it could get any harder on her after seeing how frantic she had been the week Will had been missing. She had a rough situation going into the whole ordeal, being a single mother of two, but what she went through during that week would bring even the strongest down. He had actually believed for a bit that she had gone crazy from the stress of losing a child. But it turned out that

everything she had spoken was true, and when she finally got Will back her troubles were over.

Of course not, Joyce had made it through the wringer only to have that whole situation followed up with a slow year of dealing with that child's post-traumatic stress disorder, brought on by his time spent in the upside down. Well, at least they had thought it was just PTSD flashbacks at the time, but no, it turned out she had to lose her son again to an even greater monster. She didn't just lose him physically this time, instead he had his mind stripped from him, and Joyce was left having to hold her child's hand when his mind was under the control of another. Joyce had to physically brand her child with a scalding fireplace poker to get her son back. And she finally had her son back, but Bob the Brains death was clearly taking its toll on her. I mean, of course it did. After all, Jim still couldn't get himself to say out loud that Sarah had died, and he hadn't had to see his baby girl be literally ripped to shreds by a pack of dog creatures in front of his eyes.

Luckily that was all over now with the gate having finally been closed for good. Speaking of the gate closing. Jim looked towards the gym to see that Joyce was right, a large pack of teenagers were pouring out of the gym.

Jim's eyes narrowed in, finding Joyce's two sons flanked by Nancy and some young brunette girl with whom he wasn't familiar. The group of kids lingered a couple yards outside the gym doors, with the rest of their group of friends following closely behind, including that new redhead whose name Jim couldn't quite recall. Well not quite the rest of their group, where was Eleven?

Jim scanned over the rest of the kids milling around as they pattered off towards their parent's waiting cars. Finally, he saw her near the side of the gymnasium, or course with the Wheeler boy in tow. To say that she looked happy would be an understatement. He'd never thought he'd seen her as happy as when he had told her she could leave the house and go to the Snow Ball. Now though, she was nearly glowing.

The average person may not have been able to tell as Eleven was sporting what appeared to be a somewhat nervous, quiet smile. Jim

wasn't the average person though. Having spent nearly an entire year being the only interaction with whom the kid had, he felt confident that he had a pretty good handle on reading her. And there wasn't a doubt in his mind that Eleven was nearing the end of the night of her life.

'Gosh, maybe this was a mistake.' It was going to be nearly impossible to get her to willingly go along when he told her now. But still, seeing her this happy, he couldn't honestly tell himself he'd want to take this night away from her. He couldn't now anyways, this night already belonged to her. He could see Eleven nod at something Mike told her before she... Did she just kiss him?

Jim couldn't help but feel a slight swell of anger. No that wasn't right, he wasn't quite angry, but he was certainly not at all comfortable with what he was watching. She was too young to be kissing anyone, she probably didn't even know what the word kiss meant. "I knew I shouldn't have let her watch all of those Soaps," he muttered under his breath.

"What was that?" He heard Joyce ask beside him.

"Oh, uh, nothing. I think your boys are heading this way." he responded, not at all wanting to have a conversation about what he had just seen.

Sure enough, the pack of teenagers was making their way over to the car they were leaning against. Joyce of course was parked in front of the lengthy line of waiting cars, having been waiting outside throughout the entire dance. The group nearly bounced as they walked, the buzz of the school dance still lingering. Funny, even Jonathan and Nancy, the two Juniors, appeared to have had a good time. How anyone, could have fun in the midst of so many pubescent teens, Jim had no idea.

"Well how was it? Are you alright?" Joyce went up to her youngest son, wrapping her arms around him.

"Yea mom, it was actually fun," he responded, clearly embarrassed with the way she clung to him. "Really mom, I'm fine," Will softly complained as he tried to end the hug.

"Oh sorry. I know, space, I promised." Joyce smiled sheepishly as she back away from him. Her arm lingered on his shoulder, however, clearly having a different idea of space than he had. "Dustin, Lucas, do either of you need a ride home?"

"No thanks Ms. Byers, Steve should be here somewhere. I drove over with him," Dustin chimed. "Me neither, I'm catching a ride with Nancy and Mike," Lucas added.

"Speaking of which, where is Mike?" Joyce spoke, out looking around, having just now noticed that he wasn't with the rest of the group.

Jim couldn't help but notice the three 8th grade boys snicker at her question. Unfortunately, he had to know exactly why they were laughing. Jim cut in "He's coming up right now," having had kept his eyes on the young pair the entire time.

"Hey kiddo, hope you two didn't have too much fun tonight now did you?" Hopper said to Eleven, even though he was keeping his eyes on Mike. "Looked kind of cozy walking out of the gym."

Wheeler turned pink in the night air as he looked up from where he was holding the girl's hand, clearly having not been aware that they were being watched. Good, let him know I'm keeping an eye on him when he's with her. Eleven just flashed him a quick smile before turning her back on him, in favor of talking with Mike. Jim let out a sigh at the lack of a response she had given, he knew it would take a while to pry her away from Wheeler and end her night.

"Mike hurry up or I'm leaving without you. I told mom and dad I'd have you back ten minutes from now." Thank goodness for Nancy Wheeler, Jim always knew she was a decent kid.

"Let's go Mike, my mom is going to be pissed if I miss my ride back to the house," Lucas said before saying his goodbyes to his friends around him, giving particular attention to the redhead that stood nearest him. "I had a great time Max."

"Oh, don't get all sappy on me now Sinclair," she asserted, punching him in his arm.

'So, Max was her name,' Jim silently noted.

"Anyways, I've got to go find my brother before he takes off without me. Zoomer out!"

"That's not even a real character class!" Dustin shouted at her retreating back. Max just shrugged her shoulders as she continued on her way, clearly not at all hung up on the rules of the game.

'Why couldn't Eleven act like that,' Jim thought as he looked over at his new daughter leaning in towards Mike. 'Oh no. Not again; not right in front of me.' "You about ready kid," Jim quickly shouted her way.

Eleven shot him a pointed look, the annoyance she held for him clear on her face. Forget what he had said earlier, letting her go to the Snow Ball was definitely a mistake. Now they were going to have to have a talk about relationships soon, just the thought made Jim shudder inside. Maybe he could get away with putting that off for another year... or five. After all, there was no way her and the Wheeler boy were going to get into too much trouble anyways.

"That's it Mike I'm leaving!" That Nancy Wheeler was truly a saint in Jim's eyes.

"I'm sorry El I really have to go, I had a g-great night," he responded shakily, his eyes quickly darting towards Hopper before resting back on Elevens.

"Me too," she breathed, as he gave her a final hug. As they separated it was clear from her expression that she was disappointed that their night had to come to an end. With a small smile, Mike let her know that he felt the same way.

Maybe if they got out more it wouldn't quite be this bad every time they got together. Who was Jim kidding, he had to avoid them hanging out as much as possible. Hopefully, she'd start to spend some more time with that redhead and he wouldn't have to worry about Eleven spending all of her time with nothing but thirteen-year-old boys. That was it, he'd just gently nudge her towards spending some time with the Max, and maybe even Nancy too.

"Mike let's go" Lucas persisted. Clearly having had enough, he started walking over to Nancy's car by himself. Yea, with that beat-up Ford Fairmont to go along with her new license, Jim was sure Nancy could spare a few hours here and there to head out towards their cabin. After all, she was already one of only the six people who knew its location anyways.

"Bye El," Mike responded clearly not wanting to go. "See you Dustin, Will. Night Sir," he shot in Hopper's direction.

'When did I become 'Sir," Jim thought. 'Oh well, at least I've got him conscious of me.' "You about ready to go?" he said looking towards Eleven, she simply nodded a response. "I'll see you around Joyce," he said turning towards her, however, all of the focus she had was on her son. Ha, there wasn't a chance that boy was ever going to have that space to himself again. "Alright, let's go kid."

As they climbed into his Police Blazer, Jim was wondering how he should go about telling her. Jim turned the key, fired up the engine and started pulling away from the school. He doubted anyway that he phrased it would be particularly better than any other way. Might as well just come out and say it. "So, I met with Dr. Owe..." But as Jim glanced over at her, he caught her gazing out her window, not even aware that he had spoken.

She was lost in her own world of thought. 'No, tonight is still her night, I'll give her the news tomorrow.' Of course, Jim wasn't telling her because he wanted her to be happy tonight, after all, there was no way the chief of police would be afraid of giving bad news to a little girl. He looked over at her and the smile on her face, a smile he hadn't seen in quite a while. A smile brought on by a thirteen-year-old boy that she hadn't been able to see in nearly a year because of his 'don't be stupid' rules. He turned his head looking back at the forest lined road, signaling they were nearing the edge of town. He'd just wait and tell her tomorrow after he got some Eggos in her. That was sure to make it go over better anyways. As he looked over at her smiling form, Jim Hopper was sure of one thing: tomorrow was going to suck.

AN. My first shot at writing really anything so please be gentle xD just kidding, tear into me and leave me some scathing

reviews so I can get better! I don't really have any experience writing and I don't have much of a direction for this story, just running with it. You have all been warned, don't expect too much! This is just kind of an experimental project from me, and I'll probably be reediting this first chapter a couple times until I'm happy with it. I just wanted to get this first chapter out so I'd have incentive to continue with the project, the chapters following shouldn't have to be edited as much after their initial upload as this first one. On another note, the rating of M isn't because I expect this to get very heavy, but as I said, I don't have much of a direction for this story at the moment, so I want to leave the possibilities open. If you have any questions about anything or why I chose to go a certain direction with the story at any point, feel free to ask!

Also, when Hopper sees the group walking out of the gym he notes a brunette girl he doesn't recognize, that is supposed to be the girl that walked up to Will and asked the zombie boy if he wanted to dance. I'm pretty sure I did a poor job distinguishing that there was a girl in the group that Jim didn't know, as well as one whose name he couldn't remember, Max. If anyone knows what the girl's name is that asks Will to dance please let me know, she doesn't have a credited name on IMDB. Or if anyone knows any fanfics that make up a name for this girl, let me know that too!